

Message Text

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72

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-25 IO-14 SP-03 AID-20 EB-11 NSC-07

RSC-01 CIEP-02 TRSE-00 SS-20 STR-08 OMB-01 CEA-02

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-04

PRS-01 USIA-15 NIC-01 DRC-01 /174 W

----- 115869

R 060500Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2207

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

PHNOM PENH 4481

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

UNCLAS BANGKOK 5684

E.O. 11652: N/A

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SUBJ: NLA AND THE CHINA TRADE BILL

REF: BANGKOK 5671

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE CONCERNING KASEM CHATIKANAWAT'S ROLE IN THIS WEEKS NLA DEBATE ON THE CHINA TRADE BILL APPEARED ON THE FRONT PAGE OF THE BANGKOK NATION APRIL 6.

"YESTERDAY'S ACTION IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON CHINA TRADE SPELLED THE FIRST MAJOR POLITICAL VICTORY FOR MR. KASEM CHATIKANAWAT, THE MAN MANY CONSIDER POSSESSES GOOD ENOUGH CREDENTIALS TO BECOME THAILAND'S NEXT PRIME MINISTER. AND MANY ARE TRYING TO PUSH HIM AS A CANDIDATE.

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IT WAS MR. KASEM WHO SUBMITTED A MOTION FOR THE CONVENING OF A SECRET MEETING TO DISCUSS THE CONTROVERSIAL DRAFT AND WHO ALSO PROPOSED A WAY TO SAVE THE GOVERNMENT FROM A NEW CRISIS - THE CALL FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF AN EXTRAORDINARY COMMITTEE TO RECONSIDER THE DRAFT.

HE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE LUNCED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER DURING THE NOON RECESS. THE MOTION TO DEFER A VOTE ON THE DECREE WENT THROUGH SMOOTHLY SUPPORTING THE BELIEF THAT THE DECISION HAD BEEN ARRANGED BEFORE.

MR. KASEM HEADS A POWERFUL BLOC OF ASSEMBLY MEMBERS KNOWN AS THE GROUP OF 99, WHICH REPUTEDLY CONSISTS OF 99 LEADING BUSINESSMEN AND CIVIL SERVANTS.

THE GROUP IS ALSO KNOWN AS THE WEDNESDAY GROUP BECAUSE IT HOLDS MEETING EVERY WEDNESDAY OR THE DUSIT GROUP BECAUSE IT MEETS AT THE DUSIT THANI HOTEL.

UNTIL LAST DECEMBER'S NATIONAL CONVENTION ELECTIONS, MR. KASEM, 50, WAS REGARDED AS ONE OF THE NATION'S ABLEST ADMINISTRATOR, HAVING MANAGED THE STATE-OWNED ELECTRICITY GENERATING AUTHORITY OF THAILAND (EGAT) WHICH IN A DECADE HAS BECOME THAILAND'S BIGGEST ORGANIZATION.

A TRAINED ENGINEER, MR. KASEM IS SUPPORTED BY PROGRESSIVE PROFESSIONALS AND TECHNOCRATS. HE HAS NOT YET ATTEMPTED TO ENTER THE POLITICAL ARENA. HIS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IS DESCRIBED AS LIBERAL CONSERVATIVE."
KINTNER

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